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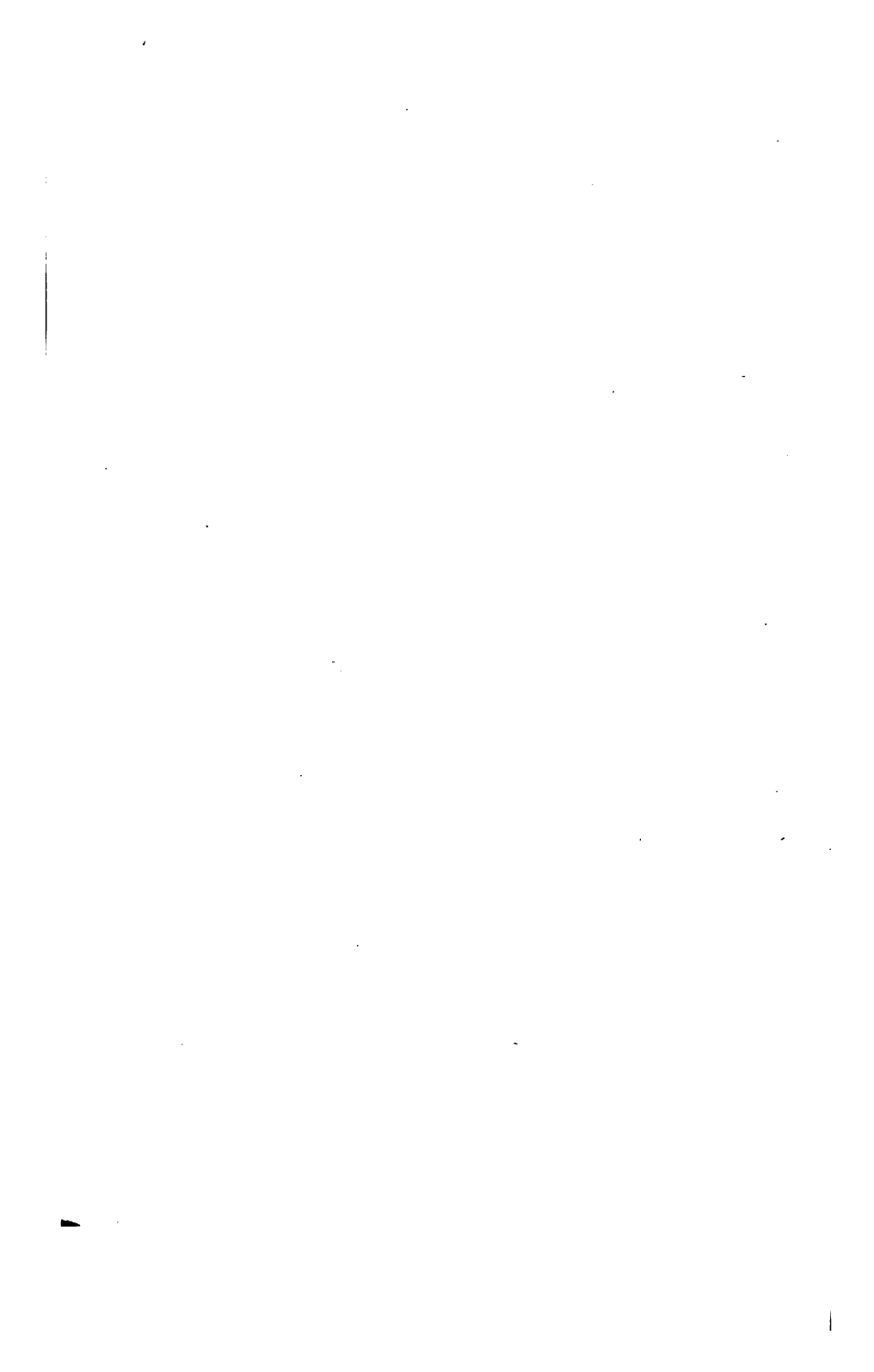
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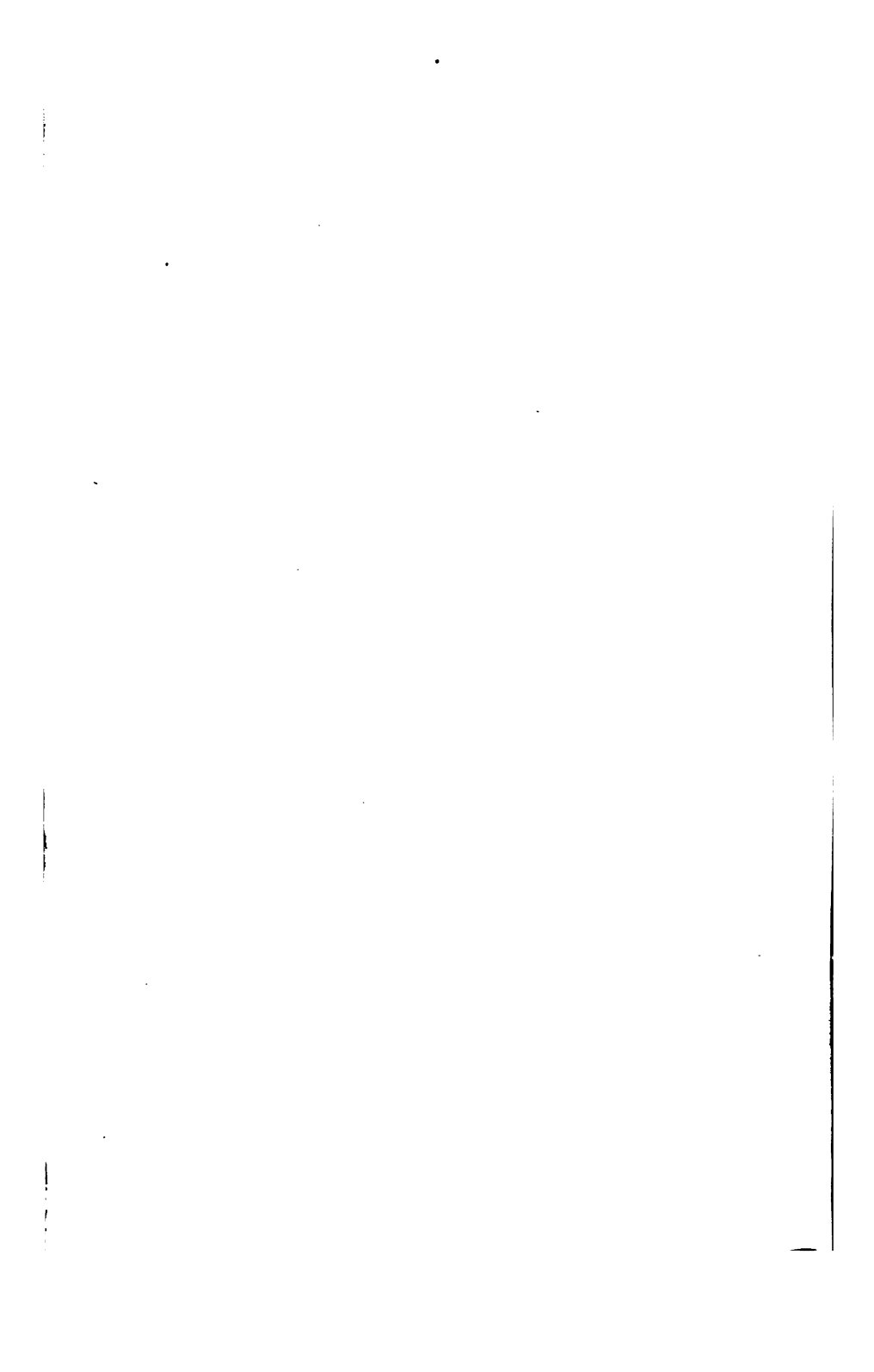
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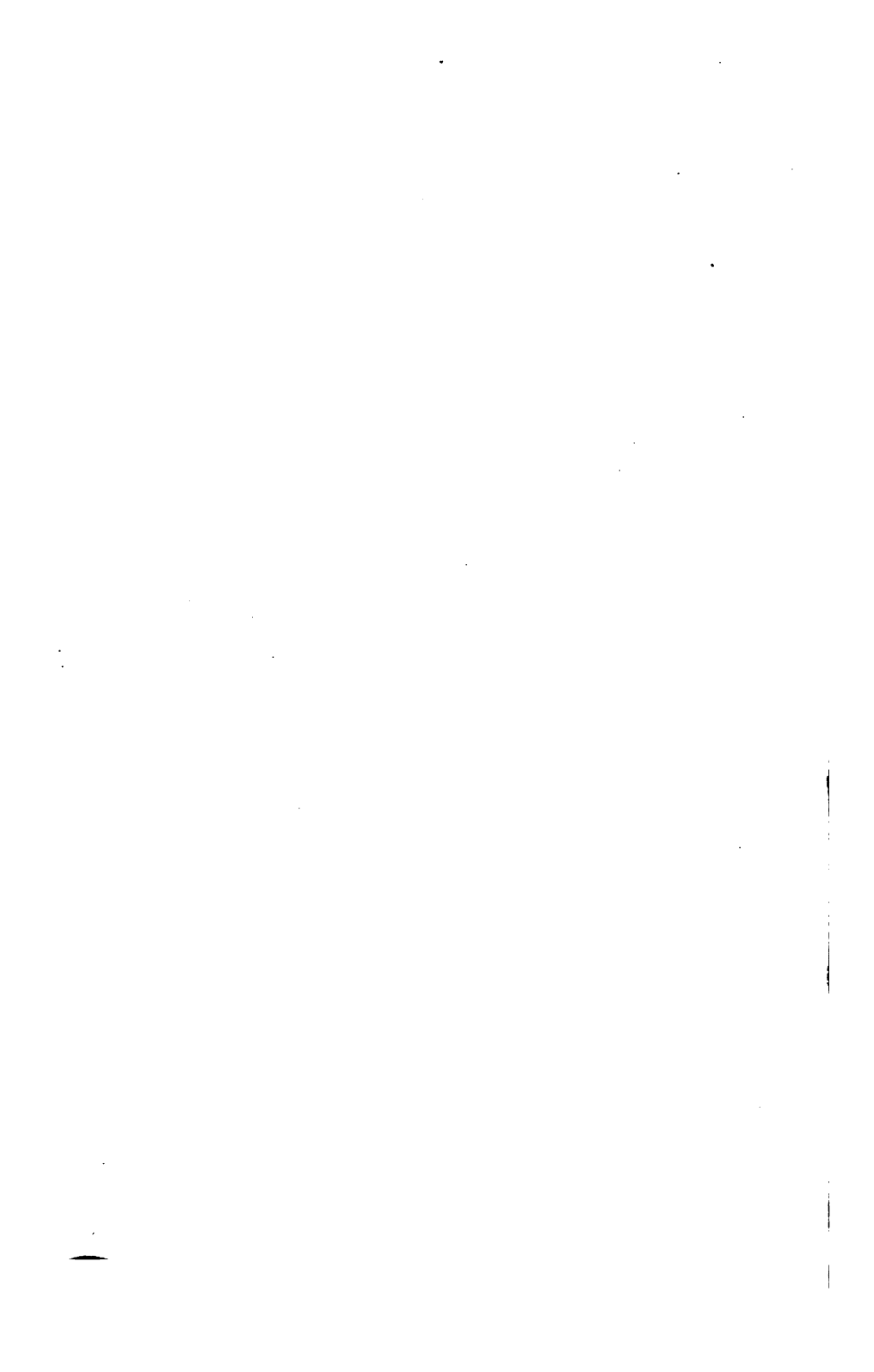
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My Father!!! May I? May I call thee mine?

THE

FIRST PRAYER,

IN VERSE.

Cirencester :

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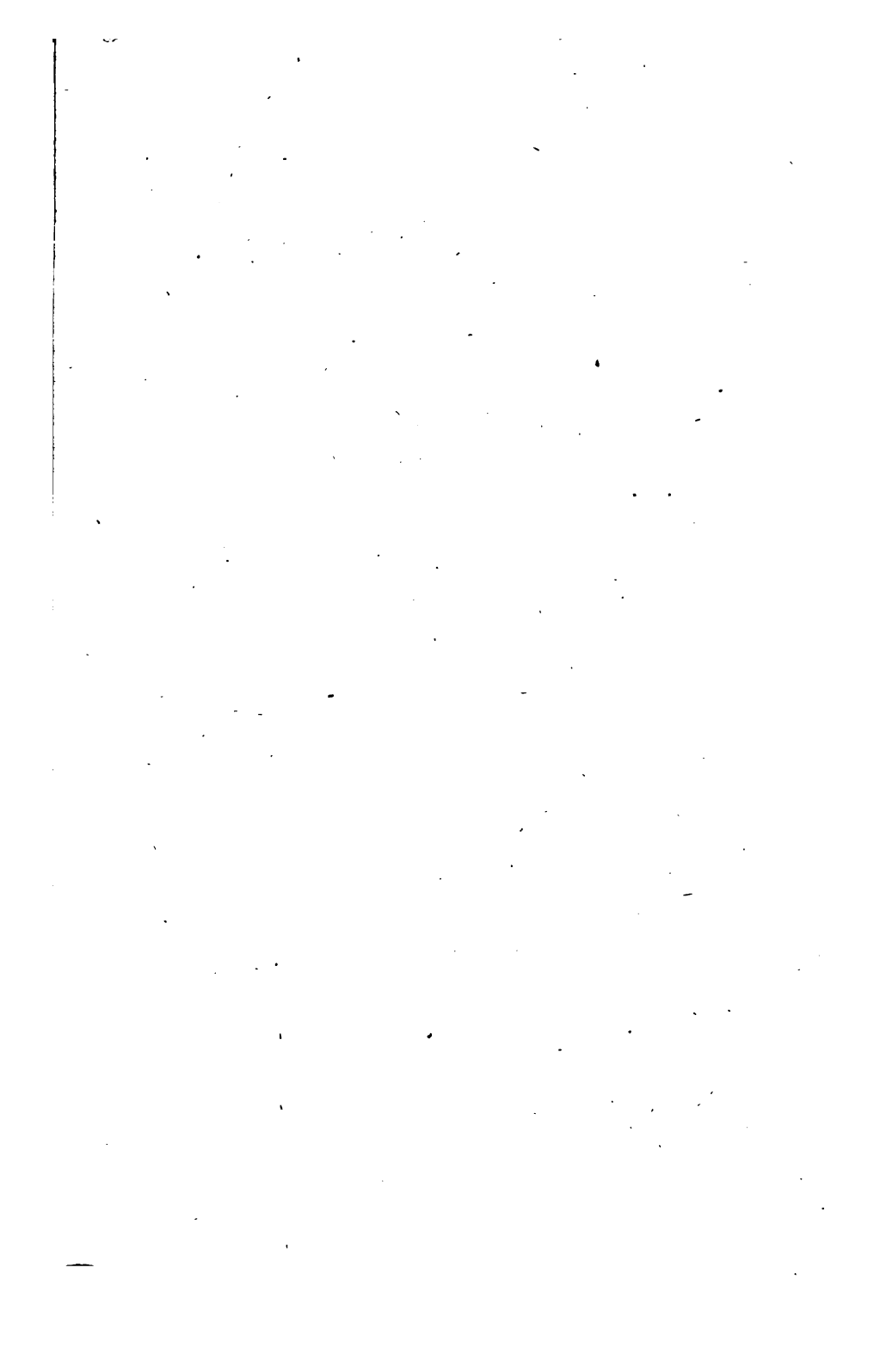
1822.



PREFACE.

THIS Versification, designed to draw the attention of Children to that Prayer they learn so early, and so frequently repeat, was suggested by a perusal of "The Stranger's Offering," a brief, but beautiful little Work.

The Author presents these Lines to the Public with a sincere conviction that, as poetry, they are nothing.—Yet, should they fix one straying imagination, or elevate one heart to accompany the lip, their purpose is accomplished.



"Our Father, which art in Heaven."

FATHER !!!

**IN Heaven!—that seat of holiness and rest—
Abode of spirits pure, supremely blest :
MY Father ! may I ? may I call thee mine ?
A feeble creature, claim a Sire divine !
Whence the permission ? Ah, from *Him* it came !
Thro' whom all prayer ascends : that Holy Name
At which creation bows ! He says I may :
Yes, it was Jesus taught me thus to pray.
Brief comprehensive form—expansive theme !
Aid me, celestial spirit, with a beam
From thine own light ; that while my thoughts ascend,
I may adore ! and love ! and comprehend :
Borrow the enraptur'd poet's hallow'd wing,
And deeply feel the mercy, while I sing.**

MY young associates, for whose growing worth,
 My spirit longs ; ye travellers from earth
 To scenes sublime ! where Jesus, thron'd serene,
 Looks down, still pleading !—on his mercy lean :
 Up bend your eye ! step carefully, nor fear,
 While your Redeemer's saving hand is near.
 Since first your lips, in faltering accents bland,
 Lisp'd this short form, with clasped dimpled hand ;
 Tell me, my loves—my little ones—Ah, say !
 How have ye thought on Him, to whom ye pray ?
 My Father ! pause—endearing guardian care !
 Blends with the first petition of this prayer.
 Here let thy soft affections fondly dwell,
 Filial endearment each young bosom swell ;
 Till the whole compass of the glowing soul
 Is shadow'd by the cloud, and God possess the whole.
 Is there a sorrow which can wound thy mind—
 Is there a pleasure, innocent—refined,
 A father shares not ?

Oft, with infant glee,
 That form hath rested on a father's knee—
 Hath met his look, his smile, and hush'd to rest
 Its baby sorrows on his manly breast.
 He watch'd thy slumbers, mark'd thy faintest sigh,
 And wip'd the tear which moistened thy clos'd eye ;

And only to a mother's softer care,
 Resign'd the object of his love and prayer.
 You smile, my loves—you own the picture true ;
 And fancy calls the pleasure back to view :
 The magic tints reseat you on the knee,
 In all the glowing charms of infancy.
 Oh cherrish'd bliss ! unmix'd terrestrial joy !
 When wayward humour brings no base alloy.
 But say, may earth-born creatures lift the eye
 To God ? sublime in glorious Majesty !
 And hope for tenderness minute to cheer
 The rugged way ; to check the sigh—the tear ?
 They may !—vast in minutiae as in magnitude !
 Supremely gracious, infinitely good !
 Thus saith the High and Lofty One, whose seat,
 Eternity ! whose sacred name is great :
 “ In high and holy places do I dwell.”
 Yet, mark what God himself hath deign'd to tell ;
 Also, with HIM “ the humble and contrite,
 His spirit to revive, the LOWLY to revive.”—
 Go then in confidence sincere, and prove
 The compass of thy Heavenly Father's love.
 A mother may forget her infant dear,
 The object of her fond maternal care ;
 Yet ne'er will I my mercy from thee take,
 Never shall heavenly love its charge forsake !

Amid my circling little ones, I see
 Some whose beloved fathers are set free;
 To these more nearly suits th' endearing cry,
 Our Father ! let the soft petition fly,
 Wing'd double ! promises of scripture truth
 Are thickly scattered, to support your youth.
 Think, how a father's eye would fondly trace
 Each cherish'd virtue in his blooming race ;
 How throbs that heart with agony, to feel
 The fire of youth spent in misguided zeal :—
 How glow'd his soul, whene'er their footsteps tend,
 To Him, first, last, Him midst, and without end.
 How would he sicken, when the flowery snare
 Charm'd the wild fancy—poison lurking there :
 Alternate fear and hope his bosom thrill,
 At the preponderating good or ill:
 And when observing friends renounce all hope,
 Scarce can a father give his wanderer up.

AND may a child of earth, form'd of the clod,
 Expect such wonderous tenderness from God ?
 He may !

How shall I give thee up, thou pleasant child ?
 Repentings kindling, for thy wanderings wild :
 Compassion weeps, and though my anger rose,
 My bosom melts in pity o'er thy woes :

Return unto me with a humble will,
 For I do earnestly regard thee still.
 Such are the words of God the Father!—Hear
 What God the Son expresses of his care
 For wand'ring sinners; how his love o'erflows,
 And how he sues the *mourner* to repose.

How often would my fond protection bring
 Your scattered children safe beneath my wing!
 And ye would not:—shall tenderness like this,
 (Which bows from heaven to bring thy soul to bliss,)
 Pass unregarded?—Wilt thou turn away?
 Will not the infant to his Father pray?
 Shall all endearment, all communion cease?
 Wilt thou forsake thy home, and fly from peace?
 Methinks I hear some pensive wanderer say,
 True! I *have* left my Heavenly Father's way!
 I am not happy—I would fain retrace
 My erring steps, and seek his gracious face!
 Lift thy abased head, compassion's near:—
 The deep-drawn sigh, the penitential tear,
 The contrite heart, the lowly lab'ring breast,
 Panting for pardon and eternal rest:
 To such I look:—and on those looks await
 A blest reception to a glorious state.

WHEN Jesus left his blissful seat above,
 And enter'd on a life of suffering love,

And kindly call'd himself the sinner's friend,
 He taught in language sinners comprehend ;
 Breath'd blessings in a parables' veil'd form,
 Bade hope revive, and calm'd the mental storm.

IN Eastern climes, a father's guardian care,
 Train'd two lov'd sons, and each his equal heir
 Had liv'd in peaceful competence secure,
 In all parental fondness might procure :
 But independance of restraining love
 Created wild desires, uncheck'd to rove.
 The younger left the safe paternal seat,
 Where infancy and youth had found retreat.
 Then in vain luxury and pleasures wild,
 For many a year the father lost his child :—
 Close press'd by hunger, in a foreign land,
 Behold the wandering spendthrift thoughtful stand.

WITHIN my slighted father's ample halls
 Profusion dwells ; and memory recalls
 How every hireling, menial, servant, there
 Hath plenty for his need, and bread to spare ;
 I, perishing with hunger, husks my share !
 I will arise, and at my father's feet
 Confess my sin,—his sympathy entreat :
 This will I say, Against indulgent heaven
 And thee I've sinn'd :—ah ! can I be forgiven ?

No worth to plead, but destitute and poor,
I stand a suppliant at my father's door!

OBSERVE, my child, there was a tender link,
Which made the father on his wanderer think :
A firm, yet tender tie, which parents know,
Whene'er their children plunge themselves in woe.
He, the repentant youth, could urge his plea,
And humbly tell his tale of misery :
His father met him, and with fond caress
Embrac'd his prodigal with tenderness ;
Delighted, kissed him; call'd his household round,
Exclaim'd, My son—my long lost son is found!

THIS parable's descriptive of the love
Of God, the Father, in his court above.
Nor shall a straying soul, who seeks from heaven
Pardon and peace, be from its mercy driven ;
Heartfelt repentance, confidence sincere,
Trust in his love, alone, shall bring thee near.
Say then, " My Father, who in heaven art,
I come to thee with an unfeigned heart;
Before the foot-stool of thy mercy bow,—
Forgive, receive, accept, and bless me now!"

“Hallowed be thy Name.”

A HALLOWED name:—Oh ! may these words impress'd
 Sink with deep reverence in thy gentle breast.
 Well may a name, so fill'd with love and awe,
 Respect establish, and affection draw.
 An *earthly* parent is a hallowed name,
 And **THIS** the very place, from whence it came
 Makes holy; in the stillness of repose,
 Like a soft stream, which murmurs as it flows.
 Methinks I hear the everlasting choir,
 Who touch'd Isaiah's hallowed lips with fire,
 Breathing in sounds unknown to mortal ear,
 The **Holy, Holy, Holy Name** we fear !
 Yet may the blessed thought revive ye still,
 That 'tis thy Holy Father's gracious will
 Thou should'st draw near with love and awe profound,
 Nought earthly 'twixt thy foot and holy ground.

No gloom, no absence of a pure delight,
 No sinful cloud, to veil effulgence bright!
 But as a child, before thy father stand
 A suppliant infant, guided by his hand:
 Dress'd by his care, throw thy vile garb away,
 Wait, watch, and hearken, only to obey.
 Hallowed! and can we clearly comprehend,
 In that grave distant word to meet a friend?
 Does not a *hallowed name* remotely place
 The guilty sons of Adam's fallen race?
 Doth it not check a smile, invite a sigh,
 When infants to a HALLOWED sire draw nigh?
 Thus, false associations screen our view;
 We cannot fancy HOLY—happy too!
 And wherefore?—Ah! the inference is plain—
 No holy feeling blends with light and vain.
 An unrenewed man's description see;
 " His days a shadow, his life vanity."
 Might I but touch a consecrated string,
 And let imagination try her wing,
 Fancy a lofty, peaceful, balmy shade,
 All earthly mingled, to adorn the glade,
 Sounds, soft and musical, with tempered air,
 Nature's most lovely flow'rets scatter'd there!
 This truth upon thy happy bosom prest,
 That thy fond father's spirit (now at rest,)

Was in the shade; and though unseen by thee,
 Shar'd in thy sacred, happy privacy:—
 Could the thought pain thee?—could it distant send
 In wandering gaiety, my little friend?
 Would she not rather feel her bosom warm
 With nature's beauties? and the secret charm
 Of mingling spirits, with a father dear,
 The solemn, though uncertain sense, brought near,
 " And feel that it was *good* to tarry here?"
 Say, in that moment of serene delight,
 Almost aspiring to an upward flight,
 Should some rude ruffian tongue, her father's name
 Taint with reproach, and wound his hallowed fame;
 Would she not shudder with unfeign'd distress?
 And mix'd emotions her pain'd bosom press?
 If that rude tongue should charge the parted shade
 With stern severity,—that he had made
 His house, the precinct of monastic gloom,
 To antedate the horrors of the tomb!—
 Say, 'twas his pleasure to o'ercast thy glee,
 And curb the harmless joys of infancy,
 With looks of woe to cloud the dimpled cheek,
 Chase the light visions of young hope:—to speak
 In measur'd phrase, and heaven to win,
 Call every uncurb'd step, a step to sin:—

How would the rosy blushes rise and burn,
 And thy calm bosom feel displeasure stern?
 While just resentment fill'd thy speaking eye,
 How wouldst thou look offended and reply,
 Throw back the ringlets of thy waving hair,
 And quickly ask, indignant!—slanderer! where—
 Hast thou imbib'd this image of my sire?
 Whom those who knew, united to admire.
 Was he not gentlest, best of human kind?
 What treasures dwelt within that polish'd mind?
His presence gloomy!—*he* repress delight!—
 Oh! 'twas my joy from morn to dewy night
 To hang upon those lips, to find him near,
 And prove each lov'd enjoyment doubly dear.

THUS, when thou seest the christian path pourtray'd,
 As gloomy, and the hallowed name array'd
 In sable shreds, which flutter round the tomb,
 That fearful object of a sinner's gloom;
 When these are mix'd with attributes divine,
 When penalty for guilt invades the shrine
 Where Jesus (spotless sacrifice) once laid
 His wearied, sacred, thorn-encircled head:
 Nor view the rising God, for sinners given,
 Nor see, through clouds of sin, the light of heaven!
 When men, in the returning wand'rer's way
 Would mingle doubts and shadow all his day,

Then with the fervour of a holy flame,—
 Be this thy prayer:—Oh, hallowed be thy name!
 And tell the world, the *only joy* sincere!
 Is when a sinner finds his Saviour near.
 But though safe sheltered from gross sinful ways,
 Thy life glide calmly amid prayer and praise,
 Thine ear a stranger to the swearer's voice,
 (For which I feel my inmost soul rejoice.)
 Yet inadvertency may sometimes use
 Too lightly this high name; the reverence due refuse.
 Then on thy soul be tenderness impress'd,
 By all the blessings of eternal rest,
 By fear for those who vainly speak the word,
 And risque the *sure* displeasure of the Lord!
 By these emotions prompted, softly say,
 "Forgive the freedom—if an infant may—
 That name is hallowed!—oh, no more repeat
 The sacred sound, but at the mercy-seat,
 Or in a voice of exhortation meet."
 A modest reprehension from a child,
 With voice respectful, and in manner mild,
 May leave impression for remaining days,
 And turn irreverence to sacred praise;
 And bless the soul from whom the warning came—
 Thus ever hallowed be that glorious name!

“ Thy Kingdom come !”

THY promis'd reign, of happiness and rest,
 Establish, Lord! within each infant breast:
 Here let thy kingdom come; and may we feel
 Thy present glory our eternal weal;
 Most gladly own, thy universal sway,
 Thy law our guide, through each revolving day:
 No guilty blush suffuse our coward cheek,
 To own thy sovereignty, with wisdom meek;
 But when disgrace awaits us for thy name,
 Like one of old, find glory in our shame.
 “ Thy kingdom come !” Lord, to each waiting heart
 This fond desire, to feel thy reign, impart.
 Should some gay traveller, content to rest
 In such a world, (no future care express'd,)
 Form one amid the circling band I see,
 Oh, *seek her, Lord!* and bring her home to thee !

Recall thy banish'd to thy courts again,
Nor leave her wand'ring with the light and vain.

PERHAPS some cool enquiring mind may say,
"Where is this kingdom found for which we pray?"
No wild conjecture prompts the *firm* reply;
The sacred record *places it on high*.
'Tis without end! the portion of the poor!
'Tis quietness and peace for evermore.
Each favour'd subject of this gentle reign
Grieves to offend, or give his sovereign pain:
All sin is banish'd from the hallow'd soil,
The yoke is easy found, and light the toil.
Frequent, in earthly monarchs, courtiers see
In the chang'd eye their alter'd destiny:
But here, confiding goodness fills the breast,
"*I change not*," and the subject is at rest.

SAY, Martha, love! and hath thy soft'ned mind
To this mild will, thy infant will resigned?
Wouldst thou "Hosannah!" with the children cry,
When meek and lowly shadow'd the Most High?
Hath thy young heart felt any warm desire
To learn his way? or do thy lips enquire,
With ardour fervent, in thy youthful prayer—
"Lord! shall I—may I be a subject there,
In this thy realm of righteousness and peace?"
Nourish the young desire till it increase.

Repel temptation in its first attacks ;
Jesus will never quench the smoking flax !
May no cold worldling lead thy mind astray,
But may'st thou ever for this kingdom pray.
Enjoy the privilege of heavenly birth,
Heir of that glory which is not of earth !
May deep repentance of the lightest sin,
Correct and solemnize thy soul within.
May poverty of spirit ever prove
Thy title to the realms of peace and love.
If persecution on thy path attend,
Draw consolation from " The Sinner's Friend."
" Whoso for righteousness reproach endures,
Blessed are ye ! heaven's kingdom shall be yours !"

**"Thy Will be done on Earth as it is in
Heaven."**

IN heaven! where love divine each angel fills,
 Almighty pleasure regulates their wills:
 But here, frail wandering man, beneath a curse,
 To all that's good, indifferent, or averse,
 Must need the repetition, day by day,
 For power dispos'd to love—to kneel—to pray.
 The holy beings, dwelling in thy sight,
 Perform thy bidding—in thy will delight.
 Is not the essence of obedience this—
 To love as angels in the realms of bliss?
 But how can mortals, in a world of woe,
 Love him, unknown, as angels him they know?
 He seeth we are ignorant and frail,
 Oh, may his pity o'er our sin prevail!

And as the man born blind, when once restor'd
To light and life, gave answer to our Lord—
“ Who is he? that thy servant might believe ?”
In simple willingness the truth receive:
And in sincere desire, like those above,
To live a life *obedient from love* ;
Evince each day, we long to do thy will,
Though short our power our wishes to fulfil,
Smile on our faint desires, and strength impart ;
Nourish that latent love within the heart :
And to thy servants be the blessing given,
To do thy will on earth, as done in heaven !



"Give us this Day our daily Bread."

As travellers, passing through a foreign land,
 We seek provision from thy bounteous hand;
 Ask nought superfluous, wait our daily bread,
 Delighted by thy mercy to be fed.
 Should Affluence ever set our bosoms free
 From this dependence, gracious Lord, on thee,
 'Twere poverty, indeed, to lose thy care,
 And from our stores expect our daily fare.
 Like those of old, we should too surely feel,
 No blessing on our independent meal:
 If tempted by thy bounties to forget,
 To feed on husks, and far from rest.—Ah, yet!
 When weary wand'ers, we return to thee,
 Pity our weakness, Lord! and set us free.

THOSE oft are found, who riches amply share,
Convert the seeming blessing to a snare ;
No father in his daily bread he sees,
But, satisfied, exclaims, " Soul, take thine ease."
Lord ! may I ever from thy hand be fed,
And gratefully receive my daily bread.
Yet *other bread* thy children must sustain,
The bread of life ! Oh may my soul obtain !
Food mystical, each day bestow'd anew,
Scatter'd like manna, in a gracious dew :
For daily bread, the bread of life we wait,
Preserve those spirits, whom thou didst create ;
And thus dependent, Oh, my children ! pray,
" Give us the two-fold blessing, day by day !"

**“ Forgive us our Trespases as we forgive
them that trespass against us.”**

FORGIVE! as I would hope to be forgiven?—
 On *this* hang human hopes for life and heaven?
 As *I* forgive, thou must the grace impart!
 To warm my *cold*, my unforgiving heart!
 It is thy precept, Jesus! Saviour! Lord!
 Grant me thy spirit, to obey thy word!
 For what is human nature's fallen will,
 But to forgive in word, yet brood on ill,
 And cherish the resentful feeling still?
 Under a ling'ring sense of pain and wrong,
 Inflicted by the venom of the tongue;
 And having suffer'd in th' injurious strife,
 To look upon the scar through half a life!

}

Forgive, as *I* forgive!—my Father, hear!
 I feel my need:—my Saviour, hear my pray'r!
 Oh, thou endearing one! to me impart
 A pure, a holy,—a forgiving heart!
 Spirit Eternal! o'er my bosom brood—
 Infuse thy peace, and fill my soul with good!
 Let love, and light, and pity dwell with me,
 And dissipate all sense of injury:
 When some slight trespass, from my fellows press
 My pained bosom with severe distress,
 Lord, let my mem'ry furnish, from her store,
 Examples, how my dear Redeemer bore
 Contempt from those he met—for whom he bled!
 Think on those thorns, which pierc'd his sacred head!
 Think on those pains—that deepest agony!
 "Wherefore, my God, hast thou forsaken me!"
 And how, beneath th' accumulated load,
 Nor word unkind—nor look, but meekly good!
 He bow'd his suff'ring, bleeding, dying head!
 "Father forgive them!"—and the spirit fled.

If ever in my bosom anger rise,—
 If ever injury my soul surprize,—
 Lord, in that moment may I look above,
 And lose that feeling in redeeming love!

**“Lead us not into Temptation, but deliver
us from Evil.”**

IN this low vale, where doubtful flow’rets rise,
Of different hues and varied properties ;
Where fruits, inviting to our youthful taste,
Deck the rich pasture, or adorn the waste :
We need thy guidance, wisely to proceed,
And shun the poison of each noxious weed :
Caught by the dazzling glow of the rich bloom,
And pleasant odour of the mild perfume,
The velvet turf, soft to the youthful feet,
And temper’d zephyrs, wafting every sweet :
Say, left unguarded, who would bend their way,
Midst *stony, thorny* roads, in early day ?
Would keep, undeviating, to the end,
Nor wander, thoughtless, from their Heavenly Friend ?

Alas ! I fear, infirmity would lose
 All clear decision ; and if left to choose,
 Would fondly linger in the mazy round
 Of pleasure, on the world's enchanted ground,
 And there, without experience, would be found. }
 Since thus, the sliding foot is wont to keep
 Its dizzy stand upon the treach'rous steep,
 And charm'd by brilliant forms, illusive, near,
 Deem care superfluous, and laugh at fear ;
 Lest from the giddy margin they should slide,
 And plunge beneath destruction's whelming tide;
 Then, gracious Saviour ! Lord, incline thine ear,
 From evil may they find deliv'rance near !

THERE is a lawful path, though full of snares,
 Temptations numerous, and worldly cares,
 Not *sought* ; *appointed* by thy heavenly will,
 The trial of our faith and patience still :—
 Wave follows wave, the voyager, opprest,
 Looks to the haven of eternal rest.
 Yet some fond tie, some dear delight of life,
 Assists to bear the tumult and the strife :
 They see their little ones dispos'd to pray,
 And hang upon instruction day by day ;
 Hope cheers the labours of the thorny road,
 And faith sublimely rests upon their God !

Though still with fervour ardently we pray,
 Oh, lead them not beside the flowery way :
 Yet choose their path ; and let thy parent hand
 Conduct them safely through th' ensnaring land,
 Like mariners escap'd—the danger o'er,
 We bless the pilot, as we touch the shore :
 There, in the harbour of a full repose,
 Restor'd to all we love—where Sharon's rose
 Blooms in its beauty! on that peaceful morn
 We gather pleasures which the soul adorn !
 The dew-drop in its cup, though on its stem no thorn ! }

" For thine is the Kingdom."

THINE is the kingdom ; o'er the varied land
Thy reign extends ; on every side thy hand
Rules with mild influence in sceptred state,
Invisible ! eternal ! uncreate !
And through remotest solitude, no eye
Can shun omniscience, or thy presence fly !
Seated, creative, in the christian breast,
His sun, his hope, his guardian, and his rest !
Oh, happy those, who love thy gracious sway,
Leaning on Jesus through their weary day ;
In sorrow, their lone state attracts thy care,
In their afflictions, thou, their king, art near ;
In joy, thy presence chastens the bright scene,
Excess flies far, and leaves the soul serene !

Under thy government, supremely blest,
 They live in foretaste of eternal rest.
 Art thou my King, my God ! or do I fly,
 And seek to shun the radiance of thine eye ;
 Am I thy subject ? do I love to trace
 Thy will, thy law, thy guidance, and thy grace ?

OR do I slight the Royal Shepherd's voice,
 And in the paths of sin and shame rejoice ?
 Light pure, celestial, beam upon my youth,
 And guide my judgment by unerring truth !
 What is thy kingdom ? It is quiet peace,
 A grain of rapid growth, of vast increase !
 'Tis mystery, to favour'd mortals given,
 Begins in infant bosoms train'd for heaven.
 As zephyr, swelling midst the circling trees,
 (Unknown from whence the life-restoring breeze,)
 It is.—Oh God, my God ! thy grace impart,
 That I may find it in my happy heart !
 Then farewell sorrow, and despairing gloom,
 The vapouring clouds, which hover o'er the tomb !
 This kingdom, as the sun's increasing ray
 Shall brighter grow, unto the perfect day !

Am I thy subject ? Oh, my Heavenly King !
 What is thy will ?—what tribute may I bring ?
 One glimpse of love, one saving glance from thee,
 Shall burst my sinful bonds, and set me free !

Oh then, my loving, lowly, lofty King,
The offering of a willing heart I bring ;
And all I am, and have, from henceforth thine—
Appoint my orbit, Lord, and bid me shine,
And be my Sovereign's sacred pleasure mine!

}

**“ The Power and the Glory, for ever
and ever.”**

THE monarchs of the earth fulfil their day ;
 They rule, they sicken, and then fade away ;
 And when they touch upon the parting hour,
 At thy commanding word, they drop their power !
 But thou, Almighty Source of life and grace,
 In whose sublimest presence time and space
 Are known no more ; effulgence felt—not seen !
 In influence pure, surpassing thought,—serene !
 Oh, solemnize my soul, my spirit draw,
 By sweet constraint, and love, and sacred awe !
 Like the six-winged seraph may I stand,
 In veil'd obedience, waiting thy command :

Power without limit, o'er a universe,
 Whose names alone a life could not rehearse !
 And ere existence fill'd the starry sphere,
 " I AM !" — the self-existent, reign'd ! and here
 I pause — adoring, at thy feet I lie ;
 Glory to thee belongs ! — that bleated cry
 Which shepherds heard, combin'd with Heaven's good
 will,
 Composes human fear, with " *Peace*, be still !"
 A God of glory — yet an infant mild,
 Radiance ineffable surrounds a child ! —
 A babe in weakness. — Here I close my song,
 All power and majesty to thee belong !



